

Tailor Bird coaxing a second juvenile along our roof of the *Cassia*. Here the sunbird was still busy with juvenile No. 1 which had by then begun alternately to beg for food from and make sudden lunges at its tormentor. The sunbird occasionally sat above juvenile No. 1 and hung head down to poke the vent of the poor chick as though it were seeking nectar from a pendent flower.

Meanwhile a parent had fed juvenile No. 2 a few times. The sunbird now transferred its attentions to juvenile No. 2 which, however, was much more agile than No. 1 and kept jumping from twig to twig. The parents had meanwhile fed juvenile No. 1. The sunbird suddenly left juvenile No. 2 and returned to No. 1. The chick flew to a mango tree close by, with the sunbird in pursuit. One of the parents made a feeble and futile attempt to drive away the sunbird.

Unfortunately, neither my wife nor I could continue watching beyond 1150 hrs., but we noted that soon after we had gone in the *chit-chit-chit-tit-tit* notes of the parents ceased.

What could the sunbird have been after? Did it mistake the pink and red vent of the juvenile Tailor Bird for a flower and probe it, discovering in the process that some fluid exuded from it? Was that the reason for its persistent pursuit of the chick? Does any fluid ooze from the chick's vent? If so, does it increase in quantity soon after the chick is fed?

It will be interesting to know others have observed such behaviour on the part of a sunbird or any other bird.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE,
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15. WESTERNMOST RECORD OF THE SCARLET FINCH *HAEMATOSPIZA SIPAHI*

Reading through the tenth Volume of the HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN I find that the range of the Scarlet Finch *Haematospiza siphahi* has been given as "The Himalayas from Central Nepal.... east through Darjeeling.....". In the summer of 1957 our family had gone on a pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinath in May. I had been walking ahead of our party and on the final climb up the valley to the shrine of Kedarnath, I scanned a cliff at a sharp turn in the track and my gaze was arrested by a brilliant scarlet bird perched in the morning sunlight on a sprig. Nearby was the dull less attractive female. I was in admirable position to take in all the characteristics and watched the birds for about twenty minutes. Having seen the bird illustrated in Gould's monumental work, THE BIRDS OF ASIA and having taken a close

up colour photograph of the illustration, I immediately recognised the living birds in my view.

Shivraj Kumar who followed a little later immediately noticed the bird which flew away. The altitude we saw the pair in May was about 8,000'. The forests on the mountains above were mainly oak admixed with Rhododendron. I am certain that the bird occurs vary much to the west in suitable habitats.

It is quite apparent that in a large country like ours, the exact ranges of birds will be extended as more and more people take to observing birds send in their information to the Society. Equally true is the fact that many more species must be becoming rare or totally exterminated as the habitat is being damaged by exploitation by Man.

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16. OBSERVATIONS ON A YOUNG CHEQUERED KEELBACK SNAKE (*XENOCHROPHIS PISCATOR*)

The snake was captured in a stream near Poona on 30-vi-1974. The best efforts at measuring its length put this at about ten inches. When it was released into another stream on 6-x-1974, the length was estimated at fourteen inches. The body remained very slender throughout the period of captivity. During these 98 days the snake was kept in a circular glass fish-bowl 9½ inches in diameter and the same in depth. Three small tiles were piled up in the centre of the bowl in such a way as to leave a hiding-place beneath the lowest tile, and sufficient space all round for swimming. Water was added until the surface of the topmost tile was just clear. It was soon found necessary to cover the mouth of the bowl with wire gauze in order to prevent escape. Small "minnows" ranging in length from about ½ inch to 2 inches were introduced into the bowl from time to time. These were taken, sometimes at once, sometimes after a few days, and sometimes even when dead. Feeding took place both by day and by night. Very small fishes were usually ignored, even when the snake must have been hungry. The preferred length was observed to be from 1 to 1¼ inches. Average daily consumption seemed to be about four fishes.

Usually the selected fish would be closely but cautiously approached and then seized by a sudden dart. Seizure would be by the head, middle or tail. Fish were swallowed most easily from a head seizure, but could also be swallowed, after a struggle, from the tail. Once a fish